

# Book Reviews

*Rain-Forest Collectors and Traders: A Study of Resource Utilization in Modern and Ancient Malaya.* F. L. Dunn. Kuala Lumpur: Monographs of the Malaysian Branch, Royal Asiatic Society, No. 5, 1975. 151 pages.

*Reviewed by* A. TERRY RAMBO, *East-West Environment and Policy Institute, Honolulu*

In this brief monograph, Frederick L. Dunn makes significant contributions to at least three fields of study: (1) the ethnography of the Proto-Malay group of the Malaysian aborigines or *Orang Asli*, (2) concepts and methods of ethnoecology, and (3) the cultural evolution of Malaysian tropical forest peoples. Dunn also advances his own conceptual approach to archaeological research, an approach on which as an ethnologist I feel unqualified to comment, although I tend to concur with Karl Hutterer's (1977) earlier critical assessment. In this review each of the first three contributions made by this monograph will be discussed in turn.

(1) Proto-Malay ethnography: Given the fact that their nearest still-functioning settlement is only 12 km from downtown Kuala Lumpur, it is somewhat surprising that the Proto-Malays remain the least well ethnographically described of the Malaysian aboriginal trinity of Semang ("Negrito"), Senoi ("Sakai"), and Proto-Malay ("Jakun") ethnolinguistic groupings. Dunn's study is particularly welcome in providing considerable new information on the Temuan, one of the largest, and ethnographically previously most neglected, subgroupings of Proto-Malays.

The author provides a wealth of information on Temuan interaction with their tropical rain forest environment, paying particular attention to their exploitation of forest resources, both for domestic use and for commercial trade in forest products, a trade which Dunn sees as a central element in the evolutionary development of all Orang Asli for thousands of years into the past. Unlike many specialists concerned with human ecology, Dunn avoids an exclusive concern with the flow of calories or protein between the Temuan and their forest ecosystem, and instead pays most of his attention to how their knowledge of forest ecology influences their adaptive success. Such concern with processes of information flow is often referred to as the study of ethnoecology.

(2) Concepts and methods of ethnoecology: Defining ethnoecology as the study of indigenous systems of ecological knowledge, Dunn makes the important point that the ethnoecologist is by definition an outsider who observes the particular beliefs of an alien society about natural history. The Temuan themselves are not "ethnoecologists", rather they are people who have assembled a unique body of ecological knowledge about the Malayan rain forest. This body of

knowledge constitutes Temuan ecology and while it may not in all respects conform to the currently accepted ideas of scientific ecology, as Dunn demonstrates in his description of their taxonomic systems for fruit trees, ferns, and mammals, that does not necessarily make it an inferior formulation. From this perspective, all systems of ecological knowledge, including that held by Western biologists, are ultimately the subject matter of "ethnoecology" reflecting as they do the cultural predispositions of the practitioner, whether loincloth-wearing Temuan forest collector or lab-coated university scientist.

Dunn persuasively argues that the extremely complex nature of the Malaysian tropical rain forest demands that its human inhabitants develop and maintain an almost equally complex corpus of ecological knowledge. Each Temuan collector must be able to identify literally hundreds of different plant and animal species. Such taxonomic knowledge must, to be effective, be accompanied by detailed knowledge of the behavioral characteristics of these organisms. Moreover, given the scattered spatial and temporal distribution typical of many tropical forest species, the Temuan collector must also maintain a detailed mental map of his entire foraging area, a task requiring long years of contact with the same locale and constant monitoring of the flow of information within the ecosystem. The importance of maintaining this ecological databank is indicated by the finding of one of my University of Malaya students (Soh Mui Foong 1980) that 41 percent of Temuan daily conversation is centered on what is going on in their forest ecosystem.

Dunn convincingly argues that it is only their possession of this vast body of ecological knowledge that allows the Temuan to survive in an environment viewed as uninhabitable by other Malaysian ethnic groups equipped with comparable or more sophisticated material technology. In making this point, this study effectively refutes Marvin Harris's assertion that the study of ethnoecology is essentially a trivial exercise. To the contrary, Dunn makes it clear that one cannot understand the material adaptation of the Orang Asli without taking into account their ecological knowledge.

Dunn's most important contribution to ethnoecology may be methodological: his application of the epidemiological approach to collection of taxonomic information from a large sample of Temuan informants, which reveals systematic differences in kinds and quality of ecological information possessed by each individual, depending upon the informant's age, sex, and personal competence, raises significant questions about the validity of ethnoecological studies made by relying on either a single key informant or by

combining into a single "standard" listing information collected from several informants. The very attempt to compile such standard taxonomies may cause one to overlook what may be a key fact about the nature of ecological knowledge among tropical forest peoples—the distribution of knowledge in the human population may mirror the diversity of the forest ecosystem itself so that each local community and, indeed, each individual, possesses a more or less unique pool of ecological knowledge.

(3) The cultural evolution of Malaysian tropical forest peoples: Dunn's principal goal in undertaking this work was to understand better the evolutionary trajectory followed by the forest-dwelling peoples of Peninsular Malaysia in particular and Southeast Asia in general. His approach, which given the paucity of archaeological data on the area is fully justified, is to use ethnographic analogy to develop models of what might have been in the past. These models provide the basis for suggesting sets of hypotheses that may be tested by future archaeological investigations.

After first describing contemporary patterns of forest collecting and trade by the Orang Asli, Dunn postulates a sequence of earlier evolutionary phases for forest product collecting and trading. These models are valuable, not because they are necessarily empirically valid, but instead because they suggest new ways of conceptualizing the processes of cultural evolution in Southeast Asia. In particular, by emphasizing the significance of trade to the economies of the forest peoples, they lead one to reconsider the nineteenth century unilinear evolutionary assumptions that still underlie virtually all discussions of Malaysian prehistory and ethnology. If, for example, the very great role that trade with settled agriculturists plays in the survival of the contemporary Semang is recognized, then the conventional assumption that they are surviving remnants of Paleolithic hunters and gatherers is called into question. The Semang may not, in fact, be primitive hunters and gatherers at all but instead may be something very different—specialist forest collectors who have evolved to fill a niche created by the overseas demand for Malayan forest products following the beginnings of maritime trade in Southeast Asia some 5000 years ago.

To conclude, Dunn's monograph should be recognized as making a number of extremely significant contributions to our understanding of human ecology and evolution in Southeast Asia. It can be profitably read both by archaeologists concerned with Southeast Asian prehistory and by anthropologists concerned with contemporary Malaysian ethnology. Moreover, Dunn's pioneering work in ethnoecology merits the attention of all social scientists concerned with understanding the interaction of ideas and behavior.

## REFERENCES

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*Wreck Bay: An Aboriginal Fishing Community.* Brian J. Egloff. Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, 1981. 52 pp., 15 plates, 6 illustrations, references. \$4.50 Aust. (paper).

*Reviewed by M. E. SULLIVAN, New South Wales National Parks and Wildlife Service*

This small, soft-covered book on an Aboriginal community on the south coast of New South Wales is most interesting because of the motivation for its being written. Members of the Wreck Bay community felt the need for a social history to be written as a basis for their claims to land and sea rights in the area. The book is the result of a short study funded by the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, and was published by that Institute.

The fact that the study was brief has resulted in a short but very readable report on the community and its history. With publication following just 18 months after the study commenced, the book is valid and relevant. It is, by the nature of its funding, biased toward presenting an Aboriginal viewpoint, and it does so in a form and language which makes it very acceptable to nonspecialist readers.

Brian Egloff is an anthropologist/archaeologist, and his approach to the investigation was to talk to members of the community, listen to their views, and supplement this with selective archival, historical, and ethnohistorical research. He acknowledges help from a number of specialists whose efforts have contributed to the firm basis of scholarship in this short-term study. The coverage of the prehistoric background to the study is uneven. It is surprising, given the author's experience, that little information on culture history was drawn from the available archaeological studies, as this could have been used to reinforce the concept of a long tradition of lifestyles based on fishing and the exploitation of coastal resources.

It is nevertheless a well-organized social history, covering events in this area, which is now Commonwealth Territory, since 1791. Most emphasis is placed

on oral history and ethnohistorical accounts of events since the 1840s, and the book demonstrates clearly the Wreck Bay community's long-standing interest and participation in the events leading to the present situation. A decision is still awaited on the status of the Aboriginal housing community land, the final position of the boundaries, and the outcome of a demand for fishing rights. The book presents lucidly the feelings and needs of the community with respect to these issues.

Most of my criticisms of the book are with production. The format is a B5 sheet turned sideways, and the text is written across the page in a single, short, wide column which is difficult to read. The maps are generally poor. The first two of the four maps in the volume do not contain a scale reference, so that unless the reader is familiar with the south coast of New South Wales it is not until pages 36 and 40 of the 50-page text that there is any perspective to the areas and distances involved in the discussion. There are other small irritations in the production. A missing symbol, for instance, is presumably meant to refer to the Australian pound, and the word *Pipi* (referring to a bivalve shellfish) is italicized along with local words although it is not an Aboriginal word. These however are minor criticisms.

The text is well illustrated with an interesting collection of contemporary photographs, several of which are of surprisingly high quality considering their age. This work is certainly well worth buying and reading. If read widely, it will achieve the aim of fostering a clearer understanding of feeling among the Wreck Bay community toward their land and sea rights claims.

*Teotihuacan: First City in the Americas.* Karl E. Meyer. New York and London: Newsweek Book Division, 1978. 172 pp., illus.

*Reviewed by* L. M. YOUNG, F. R. A. I., *Sussex, England*

This new volume in the Newsweek series "Wonders of Man" primarily concerns Teotihuacan, the largest pre-Columbian city in Mesoamerica, situated in Central Mexico on the extremities of the Mexican Valley, some 33 miles or 50 km northeast of Mexico City. The author, Karl Meyer, devotes the first of seven chapters to a description of the metropolis known in Nahuatl as the "City of the Gods" that, at the period when the Aztecs appeared, had been abandoned for several centuries, a circumstance that may have contributed to its preservation.

Nevertheless the gigantic mounds distinguishable under their covering of vegetation, observed, as Meyer's appendix testifies, by the Spanish officers of the Crown, gave sufficient indication that Teotihuacan had been a site of large dimensions and importance. It evoked also the interest of the early nineteenth century explorers and antiquarians including Alexander von Humboldt, J. L. Stephens, and Desire Charnay. But it was not until the first decade of the present century that efforts were directed toward a reconstitution of Teotihuacan, as Meyer narrates in the last chapter. Mexican government-sponsored explorations with the aim of restoring the principal monuments were first commenced in 1905-1910 by the politician cum archaeologist Leopoldo Batres, whose work in regard to the Pyramid of the Sun, though Meyer is reticent, reflects some dubiety. He was succeeded by Manuel Gamio, an anthropologist of the Museo Nacional, whose investigations compared with his predecessor made a real contribution toward the elucidation of Teotihuacan.

Meyer refers also to other expeditions that have had a share in reconstructing Teotihuacan's past, namely those of the Swedish archaeologist Sigvald Linne (1932-1935) and of Laurette Sejourné during 1955-1957, whose main find was some murals recovered from the ruins of a palace. Mention must be made also of the investigations of Professor René Millon. These researches culminated in the Mexican government's campaign of restoration, under the archaeologists of the Institute of Anthropology and History, of a large portion of Teotihuacan during 1960.

The first chapter provides glimpses of the architectural sophistication of Teotihuacan, exhibited not only in the features of its palatial and religious edifices, but also in those of the residential areas. Constructed in quadrants so precisely as to suggest that further growth was envisaged, the metropolis, according to some estimates, at the peak of its development

provided a place of residence for a population that exceeded 75,000. Meyer stresses the large dimensions of some of the residential complexes that have their own drainage, which are regarded as possible quarters for clan lineages, though quite conceivably these could also have been "caravanserais" perhaps for pilgrims visiting the city.

Its extensive residential capacity imparts to Teotihuacan all the pretensions of urbanization, distinguishing it from purely a ceremonial center. The religious sanctity is exemplified by the two great pyramids of the Sun and Moon which dominate the city. The largest, that of the Sun, measures 220 m × 230 m at the base, rising by five terraces to a height of 66 m. Faced with hewn tzonitli, a coarse, red volcanic rock common to the region, it is deemed to have been erected at the inception of the city. As shown in the magnificent illustration in this work, the pyramid of the Sun, as viewed from that of the Moon at the southern end, is on the left (west) side of the broad thoroughfare, 40 m wide and 1.5 miles in length, that bisects the metropolis, connecting the two building areas. This is lined with structures once erroneously considered to have been tombs that gave it the name "Avenue of the Dead," which are now known to have served as palatial and religious edifices. At the northern end is El Ciudadela (the Citadel), a 38-acre quadrangle also with pyramidal platforms. This was excavated by Gamio and considered to be dedicated to Quetzalcoatl. This illustration may be compared with the one on page 30 depicting Teotihuacan as it was in 1895.

Archaeologists divide the entire span of Teotihuacan into five phases, succumbing to a conflagration at approximately 700 A.D., a little earlier than the collapse of the Maya Classic epoch; though the first of the Nahuatl vanguard (the Toltec occupied the city for a time), Teotihuacan's era was over.

To give a comprehensive perspective to Teotihuacan's role in Mesoamerican culture, Meyer in his remaining chapters reviews the principal features of the foregoing as the archaeological record has revealed it, from the earliest prehistory. He describes MacNeish's explorations in the Tehuacan Valley, which uncovered the first incipient beginnings of the cultivation of corn and the subsequent development of the simple Formative village agriculture and ceramic societies, a basic feature of both Mesoamerica and South America.

An account is given of Stirling's campaigns result-

ing in the discovery of a new, higher culture area in Vera Cruz, now commonly termed the Olmec, out of whose initiatory phase the Maya Classic civilization of Central America may have been developed at the beginning of the Christian era. At this time, strong Olmec influences were manifest in the Valley of Mexico and are deemed to be present in the Tzacualli phase, during whose latter period Teotihuacan was emerging from its cluster of Formative villages. Meyer relates the advent and settlement of the Nahuatl tribes, the Toltec, Mixtec, and Aztec, the last epoch of native Mesoamerican civilization before it was extinguished by the Spaniards. A resume of Cortes's conquest, recounted innumerable times previously but an integral part of the pattern, is given, as well as the

aftermath, the colonial domination which continued until the beginning of the nineteenth century. He also narrates the restless, preliminary period of Mexico's independence permeated with internecine strife, finally summarizing, part of which has been briefly mentioned, the resurgence of interest concerning the antiquities of the civilizations that were obliterated for 400 years.

Meyer's approach is scholarly rather than eulogistic and though not unsympathetic toward the native cultures, is also not wholly condemnatory of the Christian conquest and the excesses it precipitated. The illustrations are superb, and on account of this alone, the volume deserves recommendation.